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United Nations International Short-Term Advisory Resources

Report of the Administrator

I. PURPOSE

1. The present report, pursuant to paragraph 6 (c) of Governing Council decision 92/2 of 14 February 1992, contains an account of the activities of the United Nations International Short-Term Advisory Resources (UNISTAR) programme for the period 1991-1993 and discusses its current activities and future directions in the context of its merger with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

II. BACKGROUND

2. The precursor of UNISTAR, the focal point for short-term advisory services, was created by the Governing Council in its decision 85/13 of 29 June 1985 to meet the increasing demand for short-term, highly specialized volunteer advisory services to the private and public sectors of developing countries. From July 1990 to May 1993, the programme was managed by the Division for Private Sector in Development (DPSD). With effect from 1 June 1993, the Administrator merged UNISTAR with UNV. Since that time, UNISTAR has served as the UNV focal point for entrepreneurship promotion and development. In this capacity, UNISTAR has maintained its distinct identity and programme focus while integrating its operations and cooperation activities with UNV. UNISTAR operates a global programme with an international network of advisers and supporting organizations focused on the special needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries and the emerging market economies of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

III. THE PROGRAMME

3. UNISTAR completed 518 volunteer assignments to private and State-owned enterprises and government institutions in 41 countries during the 1991-1993 period. Placing a market valuation on the billable time donated by advisers (with an average assignment duration of 15 working days at a billable rate of $1,000/day), UNISTAR advisers contributed services equivalent to more than $7 million in technical cooperation to the Governments and enterprises of developing countries. These contributions constitute significant additionality to UNDP technical cooperation programmes.

4. Asia, Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States are the fastest growing regions for UNISTAR cooperation. New UNISTAR and/or joint UNV/UNISTAR/Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) cooperation programmes have been added in 10 countries since 1990. This brings the total number of countries with IPF-supported UNISTAR or UNV/UNISTAR/TOKTEN programmes to 18. These joint programmes have helped small- and medium-sized enterprises meet in part the costs (normally the international air travel component) of fielding UNISTAR assignments. UNISTAR clients have contributed towards assignment costs, particularly local costs (e.g., daily subsistence allowance (DSA and local transport) wherever possible.

5. The following examples illustrate the various ways in which UNISTAR has provided advisory services to individual enterprises and entire industry sectors. At the sectoral level, a team of UNISTAR advisers assisted the Government of India to investigate new productive uses and outlets for jute. The jute sector, which employs millions of people from farmers to millworkers, needed to diversify to survive. The UNISTAR team recommended an approach focused on the development of new products (e.g., new materials and textiles) and processes (e.g., composites and blends). The result of the team's work is a $46 million programme, cost-shared by the Government and UNDP. In Mongolia, UNISTAR advisers assisted the State Privatization Committee to draft the country's first Company Law and assisted the stock exchange to introduce the concept of mutual funds. At the enterprise level, UNISTAR advisers have assisted, inter alia, printers, furniture makers, food processors, and garment manufacturers. Special efforts have been made wherever possible to organize workshops for groups of entrepreneurs otherwise too small to afford UNISTAR services. These workshops have concentrated on problems and needs common to all.

6. UNISTAR has recently been asked to advise Governments and business associations on the development of indigenous UNISTAR programmes. Discussions are under way with interested parties in Malaysia, Mauritius and Indonesia. If successful, such programmes offer opportunities to identify highly qualified national executives and professionals who could serve as UNISTAR advisers in their own as well as in other developing countries.

IV. THE MERGER WITH UNV

7. The merger enables UNV and UNISTAR to expand their capacities in entrepreneurship promotion and development and to provide assistance that draws on their different yet complementary pools of long- and short-term talent. The synergies created by the merger also offer UNISTAR opportunities to expand its cooperation activities beyond its present programme countries and focus in support of the broader spectrum of sustainable human development concerns. UNV gains an important New York focal point for programme development with UNDP and key departments in the United Nations Secretariat. Integration with the UNV management system will not only enable UNISTAR to function more effectively but will also help it to handle an increased volume of requests.

V. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

8. Over the next biennium, UNISTAR will continue to seek those opportunities where its volunteer advisers can make substantive contributions to sustainable human development. In particular, the management will pursue those activities which will enable the programme:

(a) To enhance its impact on job creation through entrepreneurship promotion and enterprise development in developing countries by continuing to deliver high-calibre technical cooperation to groups of entrepreneurs and enterprises wherever possible;

(b) To capitalize on sustainable human development opportunities that link short-term UNISTAR interventions with longer-term UNV assignments in entrepreneurship and enterprise development;

(c) To apply the combined UNV/UNISTAR/TOKTEN programme concept to additional countries, as appropriate;

(d) To expand further the scope of UNISTAR activities beyond entrepreneurship and enterprise development into other arenas where short-term assistance can complement longer-term UNV cooperation;

(e) To capitalize on opportunities to contribute lessons learned at the enterprise and sectoral levels to the country-level policy dialogue;

(f) To expand its adviser network and outreach capacity in Europe, bearing in mind the special needs of the States of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States;

(g) To support, through technical cooperation, the creation of national UNISTAR-type volunteer cooperation programmes in developing countries that encourage successful entrepreneurs to share their skills and expertise in the country and abroad.

VI. STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9. UNISTAR comes under the direction of the UNV Executive Coordinator. The UNISTAR staff, funded under the Programme support and development activities (PSDA) line, consists of one Professional, the Manager, and one General Service staff member, the Programme Assistant. The UNISTAR Manager also continues to support the Private Sector Development Programme (PSDP) in accordance with the Administrator's decision of last year. Despite severely limited resources, UNISTAR has continued to prove its effectiveness in addressing the needs of the private and public sectors of developing countries for high-level, short-term volunteer expertise. However, adequate financing is required to maintain this effectiveness and to expand the programme.

VII. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

10. The Executive Board may wish to:

(a) Take note of the report of the Administrator on the UNISTAR programme;

(b) Request the Administrator to explore creative means to support the continued growth of the UNISTAR programme, including the application of funding, where appropriate, from the Special Programme Resources, in areas where the programme is conducting innovative and experimental work in support of sustainable human development;

(c) Request the Administrator to encourage special contributions from the private and public sectors of developed and developing countries to the UNV Special Voluntary Fund for innovative UNISTAR activities.